II. SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

Please amend the paragraph on page 10, line 1-12 as follows:

As mentioned before, crypto processors ~~205~~225-1 through ~~205~~225-N generate digital signatures for a sequence of franking transactions in a multiplexed manner. Specifically, crypto processor ~~205~~225-n, where $1 \leq n \leq N$, is assigned by multiplex logic 215 to generate digital signatures for the transactions having TIDs = n, N + n, 2N + n, ..., kN + n, ..., where k is an integer greater than or equal to zero. Fig. 4 illustrates a schedule associating each TID in column 403 identifying a franking transaction with a respective value of n in column 405 identifying one of the crypto processors which generates the digital signature for that transaction.

Please amend the paragraph on page 18, lines 19-34 as follows:

Based on the CRC bits in field ~~617~~517 of the received ensemble, processing unit 227 at step 723 in crypto processor 225-1 determines whether the received ensemble is error free. If it is determined that the received ensemble is erroneous, unit 227 at step 726 returns a negative acknowledgement to main processor 203 for re-transmission of the ensemble. Otherwise, unit 227 at step 729 verifies the temporary ascending register value and the temporary descending register value by comparing them with the register values independently computed by unit 227 in a manner described above. If the temporary register values cannot be verified, unit 227 in this instance causes an error message to be displayed on computer 105, and franking

system 100 to be inoperative until it is satisfactorily audited and re-started by authorized personnel, as indicated at step 732.

Please add the following on page 20, line 9:

What is claimed is: